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Does Fear of Government Corruption Affect Voter Turnout?

By: Ryan Nahmias



HYPOTHESES

I. Republicans have more fear of government corruption than Democrats, which leads to lower voter turnout amongst Republicans, unless there is a specific candidate they support (ex: Donald Trump, Ronald Reagan)

II. Those who are of lower social class will have more fear of government corruption than those of a higher social class.

III. Those who are not registered to vote will have more fear of government corruption.

IV. Females have more fear of government corruption than males which leads to lower voter turnout amongst women.

V. Those who use social media more frequently will be more likely to vote than those who use social media less frequently

FINDINGS

H I: Party Affiliation

The results of the data confirmed my hypothesis in that Republicans have a higher fear of government corruption than do Democrats. Although, the data did show that both Independents and Democrats also have a high percentage of fear of government corruption, and that this fear between these two parties is statistically very similar. The data also yielded similar results in that Republicans have the lowest percentage of non-fear of government corruption, while Democrats and Independents were within a percent difference of each other.

H II: Social Class

The analysis of this data also confirmed my initial hypothesis. People of the lowest social standing were 3.9% more fearful of government corruption than those of the middle class, and were 9.5% more fearful of government corruption than the upper class. When I looked at voter turnout data, it also showed that the lower class had a 12% lower turnout number in the 2016 election than the upper class.

H III: Registered to Vote

Those who are registered to vote and those who are not registered to vote had the same percentage of fear of government turnout. This was much different than what my hypothesis predicted. The data also yielded that being registered to vote is a significant variable contributing to fear of government corruption.

H IV: Gender

This data yielded very interesting results. Non-binary individuals had a 100% fear of government corruption. Although this was likely due to the small sample from that category, it was 20% higher than percentage of females who feared of government corruption, and it was 24.1% higher than the percentage of men who feared of corruption. Although this variable was not of valid significance, did help further delve into the research topic.

H V: Social Media Usage

The data results did match the prediction of my hypothesis. There was a far larger percentage of individuals who used social media (which was measured by two platforms: Facebook & Twitter) more frequently, had a higher percentage of voter turnout (measured by the 2016 election) than those who use social media less frequently.

CONCLUSION

- While there were not a plethora of significant variables that contributed to fear of corruption or voter turnout, there is a strong correlation between these independent variables' and the dependent ones.
- Moreover, fear of government corruption does indeed affect voter turnout. An increased level of fear of government corruption causes less people to vote in election often, and those who have less fear of government corruption are more likely to vote in elections.
- Fear of corruption is a large factor in deterring non-binary, female, and those who are living in poverty from voting, producing underlying themes such as apathy and alienation in these individuals. This creates lasting effects in these groups of people, causing a large reduction in political involvement.
- It is important to remember that the only way to prevent a fear from becoming a reality is to get involved, and actively participate in creating change.

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INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

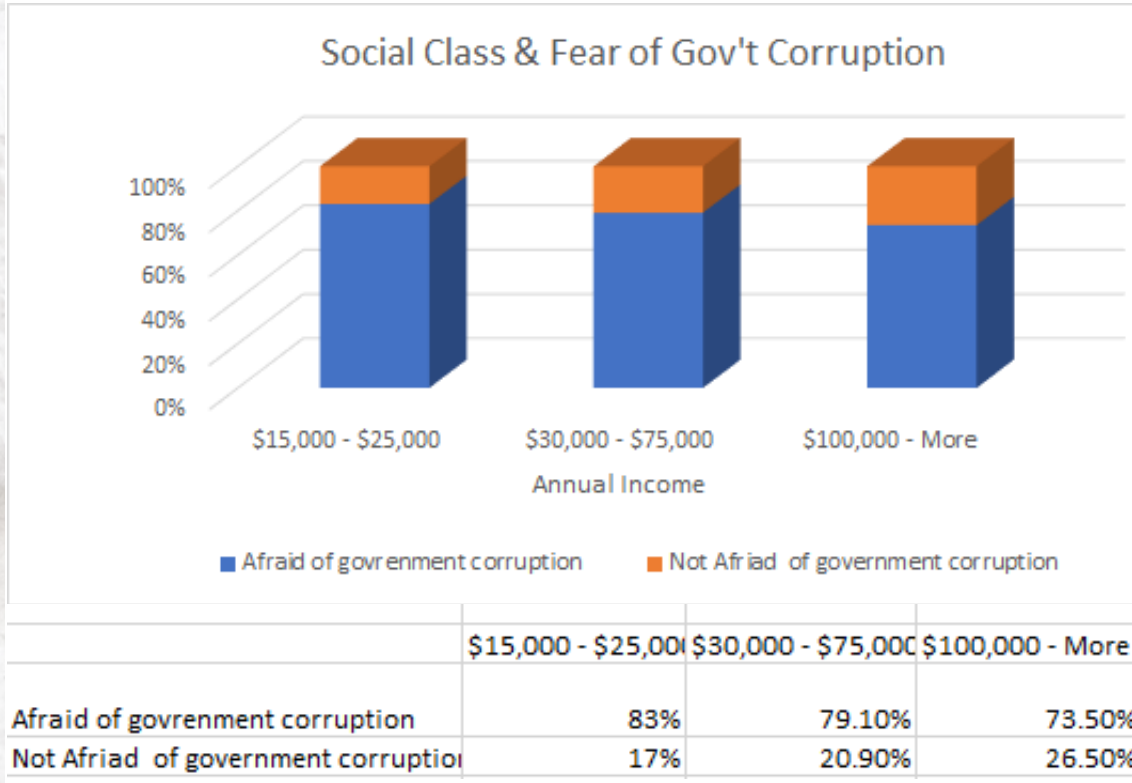
- This study explores how an individual's fear of government corruption affects their turnout to vote.
- According to the Chapman Survey of American Fears (2020–2021) fear of corrupt government officials is the number one thing Americans fear: 79.6 % of them in fact.
- Although eliminating fear of corruption is nearly impossible, limiting outside factors that increase fear of corruption can increase voter turnout, and increase political activism in the United States.
- In Democratic regimes in particular, institutional fairness seems to have a high influence on political behavior
 - Followers willingly make themselves vulnerable to leaders whom they have previously experienced as competent, honest, and trusting. .
 - Such was the case with the 2016 election.
 - 70% of Americans reported feeling "frustrated" with the election, and the false promises candidates made.
- Declining trust in government in turn leads to less positive evaluations of Congress and reduced support for government action to address a range of domestic policy concerns

- Moreover, trust in government in itself has become somewhat divided due to inequality
 - fear of government corruption is most often associated with Americans of lower social standing
- Recent elections have shown that candidates often target specific classes of people
 - Trump targeted white, uneducated, upper to middle class individuals
 - Obama targeted middle to lower-class, racially, and educationally diverse people
- The idea that fear of corrupt government officials affects one class of people more than the other is apparent due to:
 - educational opportunity
 - accessibility to social media
 - experience in a professional work environment
- Social media can be a way political candidates use their trust to target a specific group of people/vote
 - Political candidates can push biased thoughts, tweets, and news out to the public to divide Americans and create fear, skepticism, and doubt
 - Trump Presidency
 - Negative social media messages, like Trump's tweets, created a 54% rise in skepticism of news media platforms
- Fear of corrupt government officials can be viewed as a partisan issue
 - The illusion that many candidates create in gaining voter's trust during campaigning, creates false hope
 - sell out to highest bidder
 - Party division

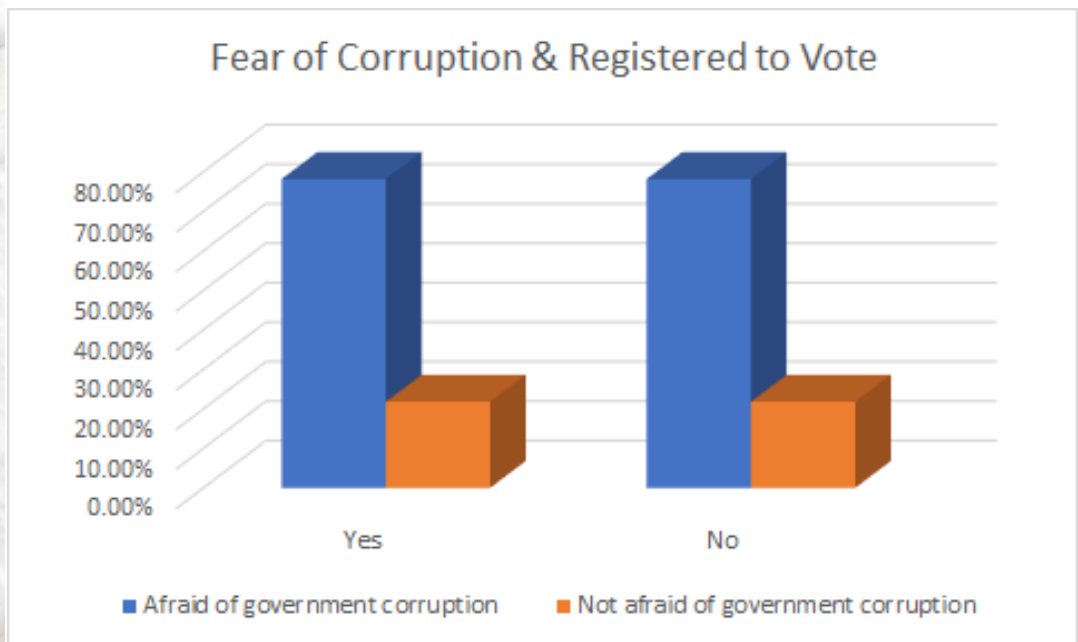
H I: Data

- Afraid of government corruption:**
 - Republicans: 85.3%**
 - Democrats: 74.6%**
 - Independent: 76%**
- Not afraid of government corruption:**
 - Republicans: 14.7%**
 - Democrats: 25.4%**
 - Independent: 24.0%**

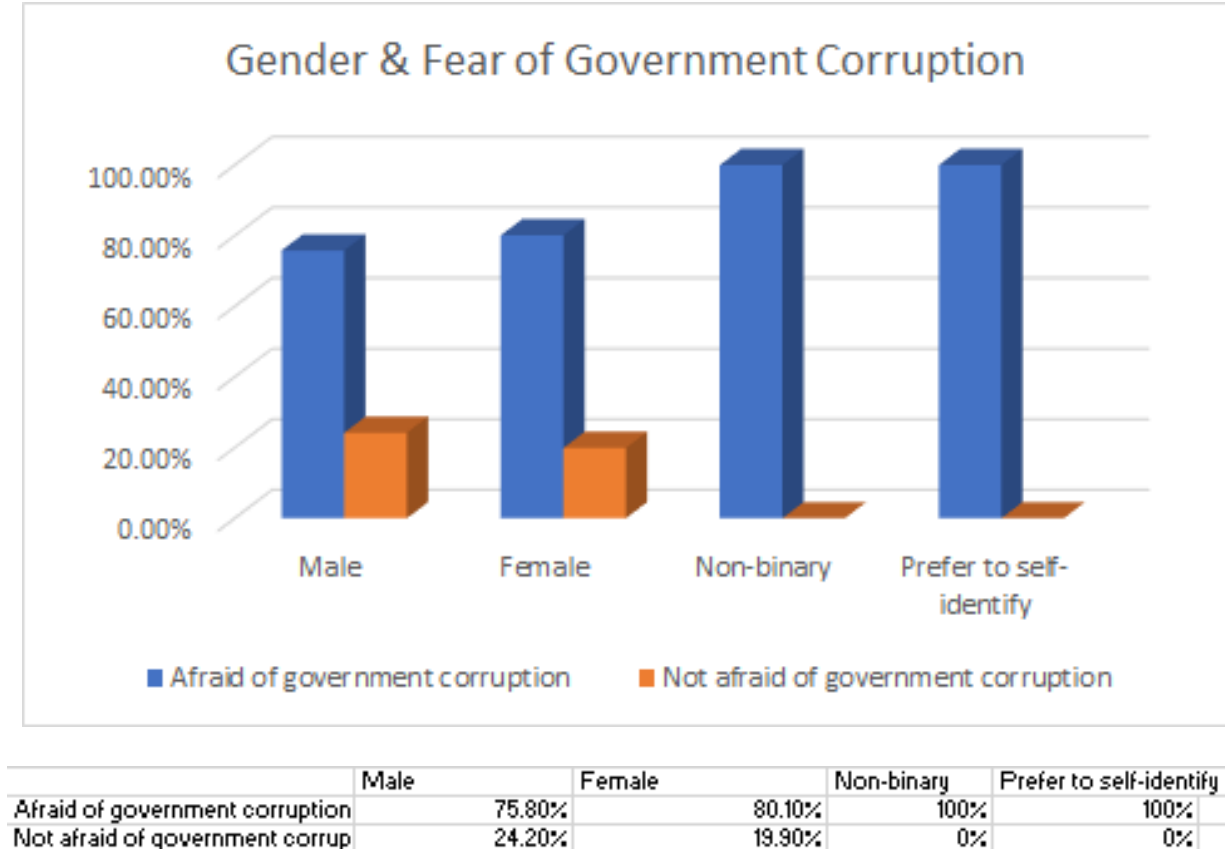
H II: Data



H III: Data



H IV: Data



H V Data:

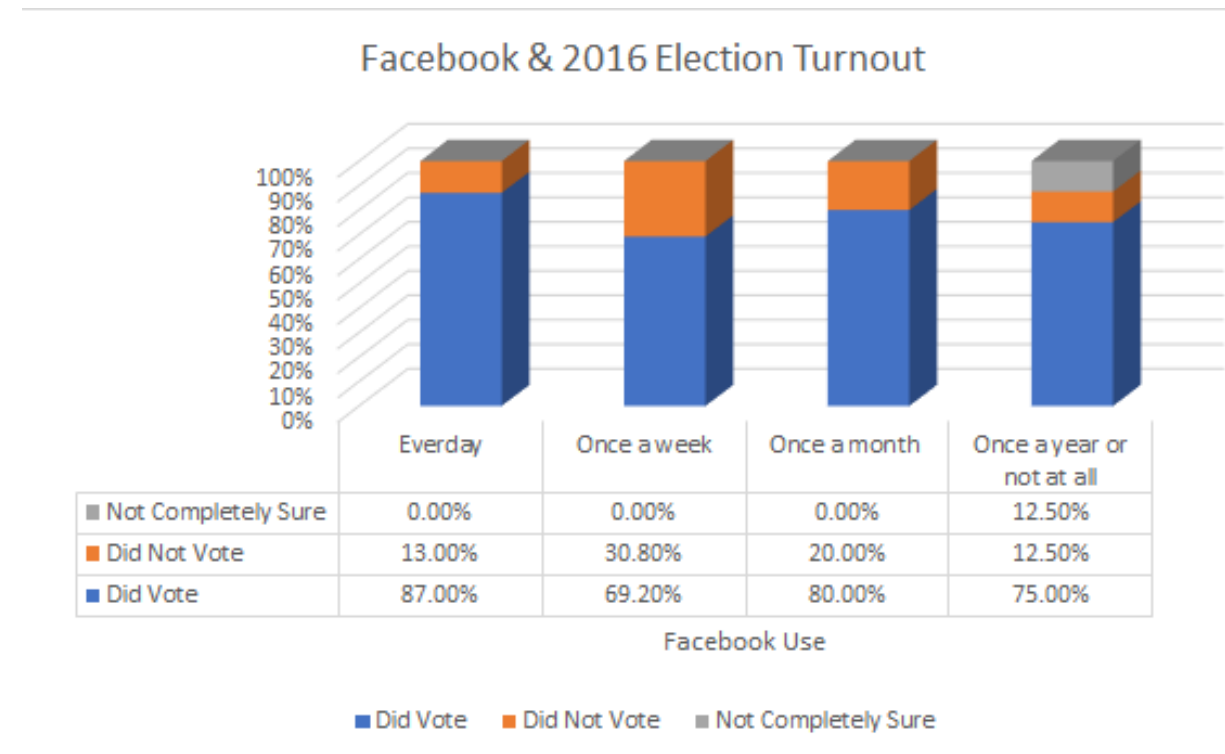
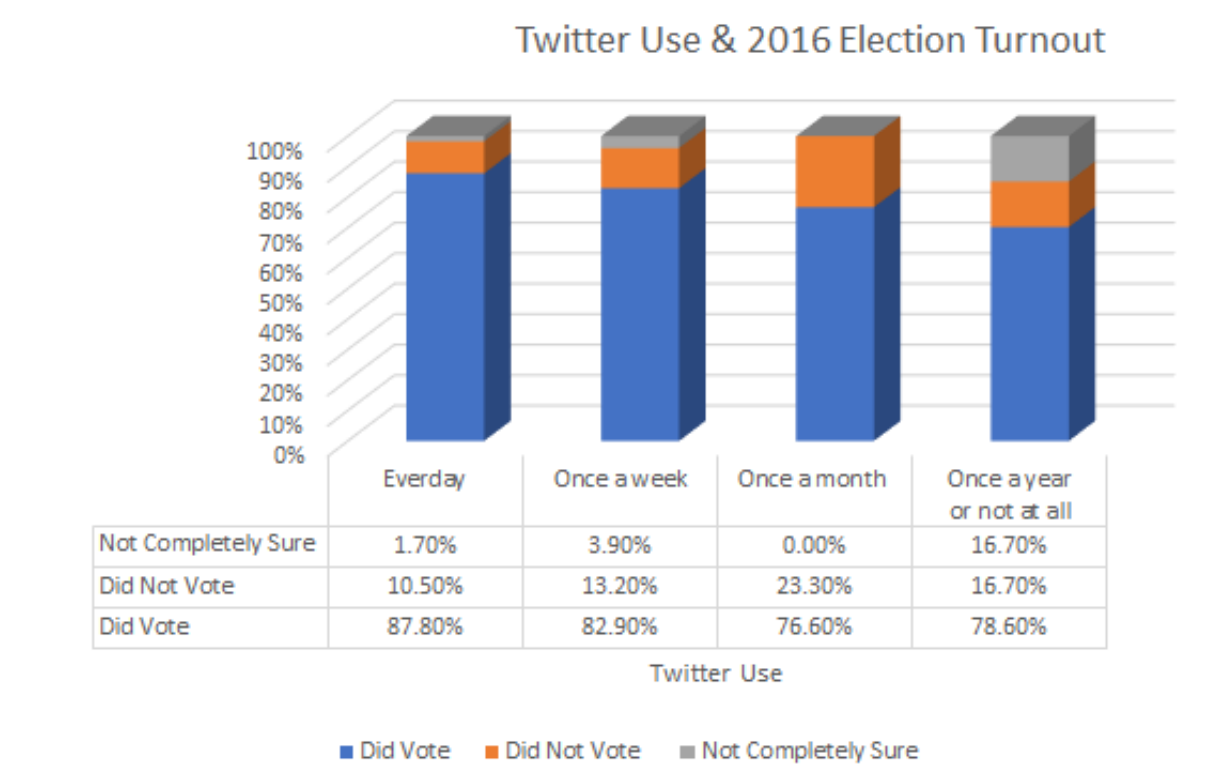


Table 1

Model	Coefficient (B)	Stand. Coefficient	Significance
Gender	0.048	-0.063	0.046
Registered to Vote	0.017	0.015	0.63
Annual Income	0.044	0.074	0.019
Political Preference	0.046	0.09	0.004

Table 2

Model	Coefficient (B)	Stand. Coefficient	Significance
Facebook Use	0.033	0.115	0.009
Twitter Use	0.023	0.107	0.015

*Significant at < .05
R Square for the model is .018

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- Apathy: when individuals feel like their voice doesn't matter, they stop putting effort into trying to make a difference
 - Interest apathy and political apathy both play a role in elections, often because of actions of previous candidates, previous actions of current candidates, or lack of trust in government officials in general
- Political Alienation: a set of attitudes or opinions that reflect a negative view of the political system, causing one to feel left behind
 - Political skepticism created by candidate actions:
 - Ex's: 9/11, storming of the capitol, Trump "impeachment", Clinton scandal, Watergate
- Political Empowerment: An internal process whereby individuals choose to participate when they feel their participation is likely to have an impact on politics
 - Political empowerment has the power to sway elections, as well as sway particular groups of voters to get to the polls
 - However, when these groups fear of government official's corruption, they are less inclined to act.